

run into is many children born with congenital heart defects end up living into adulthood without the necessary surveillance to determine what is the best practice to keep them alive and healthy and comfortable. This is a very tiny part of this bill, but it is so important to so many families that we will finally have surveillance of these patients around America with congenital heart defects and find those therapies that work best, those surgeries that will succeed. It will bring peace of mind to a lot of families to know we are going to make this extra special effort with a birth defect which affects literally hundreds of thousands of Americans.

I think this bill has been improved by this amendment. I know the Senator from Oklahoma is going to speak about the issue of amendments. I wish to say for the record that this is the 20th day since we brought this bill to the floor. In the 20 days the Senate has been considering this bill, the Republican side of the aisle has offered four amendments to change the bill—four amendments in 20 days. They offered another six motions to send the bill back to committee and stop the deliberation on the Senate floor but only four substantive amendments. We have been promised over and over there would be a substitute amendment which is even better than ours. It has never been introduced by the Republican side of the aisle. It certainly has never been cleared with the Congressional Budget Office. If they had a better idea, where has it been for 20 days? The amendments which they offered, many of them, related directly to the Medicare Advantage Program.

I think they offered at least two of their four amendments to protect that program. It is a private health insurance program, heavily subsidized by the Federal Government and one that, frankly, is wasting dollars that should be spent to help people and expand their care under Medicare. They have tried, time and again, on behalf of these health insurance companies to continue the subsidy, but we know it is wasteful and we know there is a better expenditure.

So I would say to those who would complain now while here, we are almost out of time to offer amendments, where have you been? For 20 days, for almost 3 weeks, where have you been? Where have your amendments been? You had your chance. Your leadership could have brought them to the floor but, instead, we had six motions to commit—take the bill off the floor—instead of amendments that dealt with the basic substance of the bill.

I think we have a good bill, and I think we have reached the point where we should vote, have an up-or-down vote. The Senate has considered this for a year. We have no Republican alternative that has been cleared by the Congressional Budget Office that indicated it is a viable alternative, and now we should bring the one bill before

us that can make a difference in America: make health care more affordable, expand its coverage to 94 percent of our people, give our families and individuals across America a chance to bargain effectively with health insurance companies that say no. That, to me, is a good bill.

The bill that has just been read on the floor has been posted on the Internet now for more than 4 hours. Go to Senate Democrats, take a look, you will find it, and when you do, you will find the original bill and this amendment. All of America will get a chance to read this bill in its entirety today, tomorrow, and Monday, before the vote is going to be taken as to whether we are going to proceed with this managers' amendment, 72 hours before there is a vote on Tuesday morning, so America will have a chance, as it should, because it is a critically important issue.

The last thing I wish to do—Mr. President, how much time do I have remaining?

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has consumed 10 minutes.

MR. DURBIN. I ask unanimous consent for 1 minute.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

MR. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD an article written by Victoria Reggie Kennedy, which will be published tomorrow in the Washington Post Sunday edition. It is entitled, "The moment Ted Kennedy would not want to lose."

There are many things said here which we can expect, but the one paragraph I wish to read into the RECORD is as follows, from the wife of Senator Ted Kennedy:

Still, Ted knew that accomplishing reform would be difficult. If it were easy, he told me, it would have been done a long time ago. He predicted that as the Senate got closer to a vote, compromises would be necessary, coalitions would falter and many ardent supporters of reform would want to walk away. He hoped that they wouldn't do so. He knew from experience, he told me, that this kind of opportunity to enact health care reform wouldn't arise again for a generation.

This bill has been called many things. It is officially titled the "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act." I am going to refer to it as "Kennedy Care" because Ted Kennedy, throughout his public career, cared deeply about this health care issue.

Our time is here, and in his name and in his memory, we need to pass this historic legislation.

I yield the floor.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

THE MOMENT TED KENNEDY WOULD NOT WANT TO LOSE

(By Victoria Reggie Kennedy)

The Washington Post—Sunday, December 20, 2009; A19—My late husband, Ted Kennedy, was passionate about health-care reform. It was the cause of his life. He believed that

health care for all our citizens was a fundamental right, not a privilege, and that this year the stars—and competing interests—were finally aligned to allow our nation to move forward with fundamental reform. He believed that health-care reform was essential to the financial stability of our nation's working families and of our economy as a whole.

Still, Ted knew that accomplishing reform would be difficult. If it were easy, he told me, it would have been done a long time ago. He predicted that as the Senate got closer to a vote, compromises would be necessary, coalitions would falter and many ardent supporters of reform would want to walk away. He hoped that they wouldn't do so. He knew from experience, he told me, that this kind of opportunity to enact health-care reform wouldn't arise again for a generation.

In the early 1970s, Ted worked with the Nixon administration to find consensus on health-care reform. Those efforts broke down in part because the compromise wasn't ideologically pure enough for some constituency groups. More than 20 years passed before there was another real opportunity for reform, years during which human suffering only increased. Even with the committed leadership of then-President Bill Clinton and his wife, reform was thwarted in the 1990s. As Ted wrote in his memoir, he was deeply disappointed that the Clinton health-care bill did not come to a vote in the full Senate. He believed that senators should have gone on the record, up or down.

Ted often said that we can't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. He also said that it was better to get half a loaf than no loaf at all, especially with so many lives at stake. That's why, even as he never stopped fighting for comprehensive health-care reform, he also championed incremental but effective reforms such as a Patients' Bill of Rights, the Children's Health Insurance Program and COBRA continuation of health coverage.

The bill before the Senate, while imperfect, would achieve many of the goals Ted fought for during the 40 years he championed access to quality, affordable health care for all Americans. If this bill passes:

Insurance protections like the ones Ted fought for his entire life would become law.

Thirty million Americans who do not have coverage would finally be able to afford it. Ninety-four percent of Americans would be insured. Americans would finally be able to live without fear that a single illness could send them into financial ruin.

Insurance companies would no longer be able to deny people the coverage they need because of a preexisting illness or condition. They would not be able to drop coverage when people get sick. And there would be a limit on how much they can force Americans to pay out of their own pockets when they do get sick.

Small-business owners would no longer have to fear being forced to lay off workers or shut their doors because of exorbitant insurance rates. Medicare would be strengthened for the millions of seniors who count on it.

And by eliminating waste and inefficiency in our health-care system, this bill would bring down the deficit over time.

Health care would finally be a right, and not a privilege, for the citizens of this country. While my husband believed in a robust public option as an effective way to lower costs and increase competition, he also believed in not losing sight of the forest for the trees. As long as he wasn't compromising his principles or values, he looked for a way forward.

As President Obama noted to Congress this fall, for Ted, health-care reform was not a